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MANAGEMENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

U. S. Department of Agriculture

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A summary of significant events of
interest to USDA management

Issue #90
March 1979

DEPUTY SECRETARY SWORN IN.....The Senate has confirmed the nomination of James H. Williams to be Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and a member of the Board of Directors of the CCC. Deputy Secretary Williams was sworn in on March 5.

UNDER SECRETARY CONFIRMED.....Dale Hathaway has been confirmed by the Senate as Under Secretary for International Affairs and Commodity Programs. Dr. Hathaway previously served as Assistant Secretary of Agriculture.

APPROPRIATION HEARINGS.....Hearings on the Fiscal Year 1980 budget requests are preceding on schedule with the last agency hearing in the Senate scheduled for March 16. House hearings are scheduled through March 22. (Contact: Bob Barham, OBPE, ext. 76176)

1979 SAVINGS BOND CAMPAIGN.....This year's bond campaign will get underway on April 1 with Verne Bathurst, SCS, serving as the Department's Coordinator for the one month campaign.

This year's goal is 75% employee participation from a starting point of 65%. In last year's campaign, the Department reached 75% but started from a 68% level. This means that an extra effort will have to be made to ensure that the Department achieves the goal and makes the Federal Government honor roll. Last year, only 10 or 12 Federal agencies out of a total of approximately 80 reached the 75% level.

FINANCIAL COUNCIL.....The Department's Deputy Administrators for Management have been recently polled by O&F to find out how much support exists for formation of a Financial Council. Based on the strong support expressed, the Council will be formed. It will include the chief fiscal officer of each agency, O&F's Deputy Director for Finance, and O&F Division Chiefs in the Finance area.

It is planned that meetings will be held at least once each two months but not more often than monthly. These meetings will normally be limited to two hours with agenda to be developed jointly. The meetings will serve several purposes: to keep agencies advised of O&F activities and plans in the finance and accounting area, to obtain agency input in Department-wide policy development, to identify and discuss common problems and to promote an interchange of ideas and information among agencies.

Agencies will be advised of the time and place of the initial meeting to be held in April. (Contact: Jim Brown, O&F, ext. 77161)

NEW APPOINTMENTS IN O&F

- Secretary Bergland has named Dean K. Crowther as Director of O&F. Crowther worked with GAO for over 20 years in the areas of management, accounting, finance and automated data processing. Prior to going with GAO, he worked with Arthur Anderson and Co., the Marriott Corp., and Evelyn Wood Reading Dynamics, where he was vice president and treasurer.

Crowther, who is 50, attended Benjamin Franklin University where he earned both bachelor of science and master of science degrees. He now lives in Vienna, Virginia.

- Archie Morris has been selected as Chief of the Facilities management Division, Administrative Services.

OMB CIRCULAR NO. A-21.....OMB Circular No. A-21, Principles for Determining Costs for Research and Development and Educational Services with Educational Institutions, has been revised and reissued by the OMB. This revision was reissued under its original designation, OMB Circular No. A-21 (replacing Federal Management Circular No. 73-8) appearing in the Federal Register of March 6, 1979. This current version of the Circular represents almost four years of effort requiring extensive review and comments by Federal agencies and the public. Federal Register reprints of the Circular are not available for review, however, significant changes are expected. Applicable Department contract grant and agreement regulations will be revised as necessary to accommodate the revised A-21. (Contact: D. F. Manns, O&F, ext. 75630)

USDA IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FEDERAL GRANT AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT ACT OF 1977, P.L. 95-224.....A preliminary review indicates that departmental agencies are working conscientiously to apply the operational provisions of P.L. 95-224 and the departmental and OMB guidance that prescribes the proper uses of contracts, grants and cooperative agreements for their respective programs. The first comprehensive report on this effort is due in OMB by April 30, and departmental agencies will be asked for their individual reports no later than April 16. Program and administrative staffs are strongly urged to provide intensive analysis of the possible impact that this law may have on their programs and to make certain that any adverse effects are included in the individual agency reports. The comprehensive study required under Section 8 of the Act is now underway and the Department is being represented on three of the nine study groups by representatives from AMS, FS, and SEA. These groups are now beginning to expand the issues of the original OMB Study Plan. We are likely to begin receiving these issues within the next 60 to 90 days for comment. The opportunity to review these issues when they are made available should not be considered lightly. (Contact: Don F. Manns; O&F, ext. 75630)

MINORITY BUSINESS ENTERPRISE.....The Procurement Automated Source System (PASS) is a computerized program designed to facilitate the efforts of procurement officials to contact qualified minority and women-owned firms. The system now contains a data base of 10,000 small business profiles with plans to increase the total to 60,000.

USDA agency field offices can obtain information from this system by contacting regional offices of the Small Business Administration (SBA). In Washington, agencies should contact the SBA at 1441 L Street, N.W.; or call 653-6586. Requests for information are answered within 24 hours.

Information on PASS will be provided to all agency procurement officials. (Contact: Paul McCloskey, OEO, ext. 77921)

DRAFT HANDICAP REGULATIONS PUBLISHED.....Draft regulations to implement Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 were published in the Federal Register on January 22 and the closing date for public comments is April 23. Section 504 of this regulation being distributed to agencies prohibits discrimination on the basis of handicap by Federal program recipients such as universities and State and local governments. An amendment to the Act, P.L. 95-602, passed last November, extends this prohibition to all Federal agencies. Separate regulations on this point will be issued. (Contact: Teresa Cunningham, OEO, ext. 76857)

CITIZEN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITY.....The Department has established the Citizen's Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunity to provide for greater public participation in monitoring USDA's equal opportunity programs and to advise the Secretary on ways to assure equal opportunity for USDA employees and program recipients. The Committee includes representatives with past experience in equal opportunity concerns from all areas of the country. Dr. Aaron Henry from Clarksdale, Mississippi, will serve as Chairperson. The first meeting, to be held in late March or early April, will review the major equal opportunity issues facing the Department and will establish an agenda for future Committee action. (Contact: James Frazier, OEO, ext. 74256)

USDA TO WORK TO STRENGTHEN BLACK SCHOOLS.....President Carter issued a Memorandum on January 17 directing Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies to undertake action to strengthen colleges and universities that have been historically Black. Assistant Secretary Wallace is establishing a task force to develop a USDA plan for complying with the President's directive. Dr. David J. Houston, Jr., extension 75052, has joined OEO to direct the University Affairs Unit. (Contact: James Frazier, OEO, ext. 74256)

OUTSIDE CONTRACTING FOR MOTION PICTURES..... A new method of contracting outside the USDA will be implemented on March 31. For each proposed contract, the Department will request names from the "Qualified Film Producer's List" maintained by the Defense Department (DOD). For each proposed contract, the DOD will provide names from the list that will be used by the Department in soliciting proposals. Although price will be a factor in negotiation with the producers, technical competence and other factors will be considered. There will be no more advertising for bids and selecting the lowest bidder only.

A similar contracting system for videotape production is being developed by OMB and the Federal Audiovisual Committee. This system, to be printed in the Federal Register in approximately one month, will go into effect this fall. (Contact: Claude W. Gifford, GPA, ext. 78005)

GOVERNMENT AUDIOVISUAL SURVEY.....The National Audiovisual Center (NAC) will soon release the results of the first comprehensive governmentwide audiovisual survey. This will provide data on motion pictures, videotapes and other audiovisuals produced by Federal agencies as well as data on titles, costs and audiovisual facilities.

The NAC will be requesting data from this Department on all "substantial" audiovisuals produced in-house or on contract in FY 1979. Each USDA agency should develop a tracking system that will provide information on the titles produced and the associated costs as well as staff time and space rental involved. (Contact: Claude W. Gifford, GPA, ext. 78005)

PAPER SHORTAGE.....The February Newsletter included an article on the shortage of printing paper. The situation since that time has not improved and although West Coast mills are resuming operation, labor contracts with paper mills in the Midwest, East and South will expire soon. In addition, many GPO long-term printing contracts will be rewritten at higher prices this spring and will probably include a price adjustment factor that will permit contracted printing costs to increase in relation to increased paper costs.

The implications of this situation are serious. Agencies should anticipate paper and printing needs and allow adequate lead time and more competition in bidding. Jobs will take longer, at higher prices. A recent job through GPO came in at 87% higher than last July for identical printing. (Contact: Claude W. Gifford, GPA, ext. 78005)